1:Gallin E-4,5 (1957-1958) 1966
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there may be certain decisive influences (usually along family or *tsu* lines), many Hsin Hsing villagers realize that the *pai-pai*, and to a lesser extent the magical ritual, are the main occasions for show of cooperation and unity within and between families and *tsu* groups in the village. Many independent, kin-related economic family units, which are more than ever before assuming greater economic independence, still come together for ancestor worship. Also, the whole village acts as a single unit when preparations are made for worship at large village *pai-pai* or a few shamanistic rites. Such widespread cooperation among the villagers of Hsin Hsing, and apparently among those in the other villages of the area, is not at all common on day-to-day occasions.

These *pai-pai*, as we have seen, also provide an opportunity for the extension of relationships beyond the boundaries of the village itself. Except for the occasional marriage, funeral, or boy's sixteenth-birthday celebration, the large *pai-pai* ceremonials are the only chances the villagers have to invite outside guests formally and to be invited in turn. Since all of these occasions stimulate reciprocal invitations and visiting, they therefore tend to facilitate contact and thus closer ties with *ch'in ch'i* in other places, which seems to be more and more emphasized in recent years. As we have already seen, the Matsu procession and *pai-pai* tends to foster cooperation and closer relations across village lines.

Even Christian families living in other villages in the area serve a large dinner and invite guests when their village holds an elaborate *pai-pai*. Although they themselves do not worship, these Christians realize that they have few opportunities to have guests and receive return invitations from relatives and friends. On such occasions they also feel obliged to do as the others do in order to avoid the laughter and criticism of their neighbors. People would say that they are either "too tight to spend the money" or perhaps just too poor. Such criticism tends to lower the reputation and general status of the family, and thus even Christians, on occasion, succumb to community pressures.

Religious and magical rituals in the Hsin Hsing area seem in general to be holding their own in face of the socioeconomic changes we have noted—changes brought about by increased economic security, higher standards of living and health, improved communications, and increased mobility. It is clear, though, that some practices of religion and magic have been weakened both in intensity and frequency. For example, many curative magical practices have been supplanted by Western medical practices as a primary means of curing. The significance attached to religious holidays such as the New Year and even some ancestral-worship ceremonies has actually de-

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creased as urbanization and mobility to and from the city have affected village life; the urban-based villagers less frequently find it necessary or particularly desirable to return home for these occasions.

This is far from indicating, however, that all religious and magical practice is on the wane. While the traditional significance attached to some rituals has lessened, that of others has remained the same, and some have even, perhaps, increased in popularity. For example, the large shamanistic (sometimes almost orgiastic) rituals, and certain religious calendrical rituals such as the village god's birthday *pai-pai*, that draw the active participation of virtually the entire village population show no signs of weakening. Their continued and possibly even increased popularity, in fact, seems to go hand in hand with other changes in the society, including the growing influence of city life on the villagers. The same urban-dwelling villagers who can hardly be bothered to return for the more sedate New Year and ancestral-worship rituals continue to pay attention to these more dynamic rituals, as do villagers who have developed important urban ties by past residence or prolonged visits to the city. Perhaps these rites better satisfy the intensified need for excitement and entertainment stimulated by urban experiences.

But there are also other reasons for the continued importance of ritual activities in the life of the village. While the villagers are naturally unaware of the more subtle functions of ritual discussed earlier, they do recognize the part rituals can play in strengthening moral attitudes like filial piety and concepts like community cooperation. The *tao shih* priests, as we saw for example in Chapter 7, are quite open and willing at the least enquiry to tell people of the funeral ritual's multiple purposes, including those of reinforcing the moral system and relieving the anxiety which accompanies both life and death.

Other forms of religious and magical rituals serve to furnish a framework for unity and cooperation in village life whose economic and social bases have been deteriorating. The gradual breakdown of some traditional patterns, formerly based on village community life and socioeconomic necessity, has left an urgent need for some firm means to instill a sense of cohesion in the people who remain in a geographic unit. For this purpose even ancestor worship continues to play its integrative role at the family or *tsu* level.

Thus, with all the socioeconomic developments, despite some changes in form and emphasis, ritual generally is still a vital means of maintaining some semblance of communal life, even if these integrative ritual occasions are manifest only intermittently. It therefore seems reasonable to expect the performance of ritual to continue to have real importance in the lives of Hsin Hsing area villagers, although changes in emphasis are also likely to continue to occur.